

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NOUAKC 01967 151445Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----045284 151451Z /50

O 151400Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHBC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9957
AMEMBASSYALGIER NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN NIQKT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RABAT NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1967

EXDIS

BONN FOR MOOSE

LONDON FON SAUNDERS

PARIS FOR MOOSE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MO, MR, SS
SUBA: RESOLUTION OF THE SAHARA CONFLICT

REF: STATE 178745

1. WITH NEW MAURITANIAN REGIME IN PROCESS OF SETTING ITS POLICY
FOR SAHARA CONFLICT,
IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO SAY WITH CERTTINTY HOW MAURITANIA WILL
REACT TOWARDS AMENDMENT OF ARMS ACCORD TO PERMIT USE OF U.S.- SUPPLIED

WEAPONS OUTSIDE
MOROCCO'S 1960 BORDERS. MAURITANIAN LEADERS HAVE GIVEN US CLEAR
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SIGNALS THAT THEY WANT TO END THE WAR, NEW LEADERSHIP ALSO SEEMS
PREPARED TO MAKE CONCESSIONS, NOTABLE ON DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH
POLISARIO, THAT PREVIOUS REGIME WOULD NOT HAVE ACCEPTED. HOWEVER,
MARITANIANS ARE STILL GROPING FOR A FORMULA UNDER WHICH
PROCESS COULD START.

2. CRUCIAL TO MAURITANIAN THINKING WILL BE MOROCCAN ATTITUDE. AS WE

HAVE REPORTED, MOROCCAN EMISSARIES HAVE BEEN IN NOUAKCHOTT ALMOST CONSTANTLY SINCE COUP, AND MAURITANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER LAGHDAF RETURNED HERE FROM RABAT JULY 15 AFTER PRESENTING MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MOUSTAPHA TO KING HASSAN. MAURITANIANS CLEARLY FEAR THAT AN OVERLY DOVISH MAURITANIAN ATTITUDE WILL PRODUCE A VIOLENT MOROCCAN REACTION, INVOLVING, PERHAPS, A THREAT TO NEW REGIME. WITH POLITICAL SITUATION HERE IN FLUX, AND WITH LARGE MOROCCAN MILITARY PRESENCE WITHIN COUNTRY, SUCH A THREAT WOULD NOT BE IDLE. KING HASSAN'S REFERENCE TO QUOTE RETURN TO REWFO UNQUOTE IN HIS PARIS MATCH INTERVIEW MAY BE CAUSE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THIS REGIME. NONETHELESS, WE SUSPECT THAT MAURITANIAN LEADERS ARE PROCEEDING WITH GREAT CAUTION IN MAKING THEIR VIEWS KNOWN TO THE MOROCCANS.

3. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, OUR GUESS IS THAT MAURITANIANS WOULD PREFER THAT A DECISION ON USE OF AMERICAN ARMS IN SAHARA NOT BE MADE AT THIS TIME RPT AT THIS TIME. ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD DOUBTLESS BE PLEASED AT NEW EVIDENCE OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIAN-MOROCCAN CAUSE IN CONFLICT, THIS SATISFACTION WOULD, IN OUR VIEW, BE MORE THAN OFFSET BY THREE CONCERNS:

A. THAT OUR SUPPORT WOULD CAUSE THE MOROCCAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WAR TO HARDEN. SUCH A STIFFENING COULD INCREASE MOROCCAN HOSTILITY TO MAURITANIAN EFFORTS TO PUSH FOR A QUICK, PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT.

B. THAT MOROCCO'S INCLINATION TO WIDEN ITS OWN WAR EFFORT, PERHAPS TO INCLUDE A HIGHER LEVEL OF MILITARY ACTIVITY
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WITHIN MAURITANIA, WOULD GROW. NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL AND MINING COMPANY DIRECTOR GENERAL ANN INFLUENTIAL REGIME FIGURE ISMAEL OULD AMAR TOLD ME FLATLY THAT THTI REGIME WOULD NOT WELCOME FURTHER MOROCCAN INTERVENTION IN THE MAURITANIAN PART OF THE WAR.

C. ABOVE ALL, THAT A DECISION TO AMEND THE AGREEMENT MIGHT CAUSE THE POLISARIO TO RENOUNCE ITS CEASEFIRE AND RESUME ATTACKS ON THE ZOUPEITE-NOUADHIBOU RAIL LINE. AMAR EMPHASIZED TO ME THAT UNINTERRUPTED OPERATION OF THE IRON ORE TRAIN WAS CRUCIAL TO THE EFFORT TO EXTRICATE MAURITANIA FROM THE STATE FINANCIAL COLLAPSE IN WHICH IT FINDS ITSELF. EXPORT FIGURES FOR JUNE WERE DISASTROUS, AMAR SAID, AND THIS SITUATION MUST BE REVERSED AT ANY PRICE.

4. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THE NEW MAURITANIAN LEADERS WANT PEACE AND IS TRYING TO PERSUADE THE MOROCCANS TO LET THEM MAKE IT. THEY HAVE ASKED US TO USE OUR INFLUENCE TO PUSH THE MOROCCANS TO SEEK A PEACEFUL SOLUTION, AND WE DOUBT THAT THIS REGIME WOULD SEE PERMISSION FOR OUR ARMS TO BE USED IN THE SAHARA AS SERVING THAT OBJECTIVE.

5. THE FOREGOING ASSESSMENT IS MADE IN A VERY FLUID SITUA-

TION. WE WILL REPORT DEVELOPMENTSAS THEY OCCUR. KRYZA

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RESOLUTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NOUAKC01967
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780290-1273
Format: TEL
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780757/aaaabvmo.tel
Line Count: 117
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fcd20773-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 178745
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1997326
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: A: RESOLUTION OF THE SAHARA CONFLICT
TAGS: PEPR, MO, MR, SS
To: STATE ALGIERS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fcd20773-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014